

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal NHP
Trails of the Great Falls Area

Great Falls Area Hiking Trail Descriptions

<div><div>Billy Goat Trail Section “A” Great Falls to Anglers Inn</div><div>The Billy Goat Trail is comprised of three sections of trail. Section “A” is the longest section and by far the most heavily used. Section “A”, marked with blue colored blazes on trees and rocks, is a 1.7-mile trail over extremely difficult and dangerous terrain. Visitors in less than optimal health, carrying small children, or those hikers who are not experienced and properly outfitted, should consider trail hiking options carefully. Contact the ranger staff at the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center or consult the list for hiking options in the Great Falls area.</div><div>Accessing the Billy Goat Trail</div><div>The trail starts at the intersection of the C&O Canal NHP towpath at the stop gate below Great Falls and ends just upstream from the park’s Anglers Inn access point on the towpath. Visitors may access Section “A” of the Billy Goat Trail from either towpath intersection. To return to your starting point, either re-hike the entire trail or return via the park’s towpath for a roundtrip hike of 3.6 miles, which may take over three hours to complete. Billy Goat Trail sections “B” and “C” are less arduous and are located near the Anglers Inn and Carderock areas of the park. The three trails intersect the towpath. Information is available at the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center.</div><div>Bear Island and the Billy Goat Trail</div><div>Billy Goat Trail section “A” is on Bear Island, which lies between the Potomac River and the old river channel of the canal now known as Widewater. The National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy jointly manage Bear Island, an unusual ecosystem with many sensitive plant resources. Lessen your impact by remaining on the blazed trail. Please be kind to this environment and help preserve it for future generations of hikers on Bear Island and the Billy Goat Trail.</div><div>Rev: 04/03/02</div></div>	<div><div>Trail Safety Recommendations</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• ALLOW ENOUGH TIME TO FINISH YOUR ENTIRE HIKE BEFORE SUNSET; trails are very difficult to follow and distinguish after dark. Attempting to hike trails after dark greatly increases your risk of being lost, injured and/or stranded overnight.• BE PREPARED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXTREMES such as hot/humid weather, rain, snow, sleet/ice, and cold temperatures. Heat reflection and lack of adequate shade on the rocky sections of trails can greatly increase hikers’ exposure during the summer months.• CARRY ADEQUATE FLUIDS & REPLENISH FLUIDS REGULARLY IN SUMMER MONTHS. Dehydration and heat stress can lead to heat stroke and death.• WEAR APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR with adequate soles and ankle support for rocky trail hiking.</div><div>National Park Service Regulations</div><div><p>These regulations are enforced to protect the resource and provide for your safety. A more complete list is available by contacting the National Park Service.</p><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO NOT DISTURB PARK RESOURCES. Federal law protects park natural and cultural resources.• THE PARK IS A TRASH FREE PARK. Please carry out whatever you carry in.• PETS MUST BE LEASHED. Park regulation requires that all pets be leashed AND be under physical control at all times while in the park. Owners must remove pet droppings from park. Pets are not permitted on Billy Goat Trail Section “A” or on the Olmsted Island Bridges.• BICYCLES ARE ONLY ALLOWED ON THE TOWPATH AND BERMA ROAD. Bicycles are prohibited on trails.• DO NOT ENTER THE POTOMAC RIVER. In order to prevent drowning, entering the Potomac River for swimming or wading has been determined to be unsafe and is against the law. Cliff jumping into the river is extremely dangerous and is also prohibited• ALCOHOL IS PROHIBITED.• COLLECTING OR DISTURBING PLANTS (including wildflowers), animals or artifacts is prohibited.• KEEP WILDLIFE WILD. Do not feed wildlife (including deer, ducks and geese).• CAMPING/FIRES ARE PROHIBITED in the area. Camping/Fires are only permitted in designated sites such as park campgrounds.• HUNTING AND USE OF FIREARMS ARE PROHIBITED.• PARK CLOSES AT DARK.</div></div></div>	<div><div>TRAIL & LENGTH (one way)</div><div>Anglers Spur 0.5 mile</div><div>Berma Road 1.4 mile</div><div>Billy Goat Trail Section A 1.7 miles</div><div>Billy Goat Trail Section B 1.4 miles</div><div>Billy Goat Trail Section C 1.6 miles</div><div>Falls Road Spur 0.1 mile</div><div>Ford Mine Trail 0.8 mile</div><div>Gold Mine Loop 3.2 miles loop</div><div>Lock 19 Loop 0.5 mile</div><div>Lock 16 Spur 0.3 mile</div><div>Olmsted Island Bridges 0.2 mile</div><div>Overlook Trail 0.4 mile</div><div>River Trail 1.0 mile</div><div>Rockwood Spur 0.2 mile</div><div>Valley Trail 0.6 mile</div><div>Woodland Trail 0.7 mile</div></div>	<div><div>DESCRIPTION</div><div>Moderate. Start at Anglers Inn parking area and follow Berma Road about .1 mile to trail on right. Take trail uphill at left fork. Anglers Spur Trail ascends along ridge through thick woods to the Gold Mine Loop. (yellow blaze)</div><div>Easy, level hike with beautiful views of Widewater; outstanding during fall colors. More wooded than the towpath, the old conduit road runs parallel to the canal from Lock 16 to Anglers Inn. Begin on towpath and cross canal by footbridge at the stop lock below the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center. Return via towpath. Berma Road also serves as a bicycle detour for the towpath. See map. (Gravel)</div><div>Strenuous. Be prepared for this trail. See cautions. It is a very physically demanding trail. Scrambling over angled rocks, boulders and climbing are required. Beautiful views of Mather Gorge and river. Trail follows cliff along river and rejoins towpath 0.7 mile north of Anglers Inn. Trail makes a 3.7 mile loop via Towpath. There are no shortcuts over rocks. Dogs are not permitted. (blue blaze)</div><div>Moderate. Access the trail from the towpath at Anglers Inn or from Carderock. Trail passes through floodplain forest for a gentle hike along the river. Minimal rock scrambling required. (blue blaze)</div><div>Moderate. Scenic river views and a small waterfall are encountered on this trail. Access from Carderock. (blue blaze)</div><div>Short spur trail connecting the Gold Mine Loop to Falls Road. Trail passes directly through remains of the defunct Maryland Mine. A few mining features remain for interpretation. There is an interpretive exhibit panel off Falls Road. (yellow blaze)</div><div>Moderate. Woodland trail leads over streams to remains of historic gold mining operations, dating 1880’s through 1921. Access trail at end of Great Falls Parking lot. Trail is not a loop trail. (blue blaze)</div><div>Moderate. Deer, fox and woodpeckers share the gentle wooded trail with remains of mine diggings. The Maryland Mine (1867-1939) process gold near Falls Road and MacArthur Blvd. Begin the blue blazed trail uphill behind the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center. Loop returns you to the Tavern. Spur trails (yellow blaze) lead to mine ruins, to Anglers Inn and to Berma Road near Lock 16. (blue blaze)</div><div>Easy short hike uphill to old trolley turnaround. Take the Gold Mine Loop behind Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center and branch off to right on first yellow blazed trail returning to Lock 19 and towpath. (yellow blaze)</div><div>Short trail connects Berma Road and Gold Mine Loop. From towpath, cross footbridge to Berma Road. Downstream from Lock 16, look for yellow blazes. (yellow blaze)</div><div>Easy. Series of bridges and boardwalks provide access across the river. Bridges traverse a unique floodplain terrace environment and end at the Great Falls overlook. Spectacular view of the Falls and the head of Mather Gorge. Handicap Accessible. Dogs are not permitted. (paved)</div><div>Easy hike uphill to scenic vista overlooking the Potomac River. From the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center pass the first trail for Lock 19 loop to the second trailhead for Lock 19. Take the Lock 19 loop trail and take the first intersecting trail to the right. (no blaze)</div><div>Easy. From the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center, cross canal at Lock 20 and walk upstream about 400 feet past the Washington Aqueduct intake platform and observation deck. The River Trail will be accessed on the left. Sandy and sometimes muddy along the river’s edge, the trail is a gentle stroll through a rich floodplain forest to Cool Spring Branch. Return via towpath 1 mile to the Tavern. (no blaze)</div><div>Short trail connects Rockwood Manor Park to the Gold Mine Loop. No parking available on MacArthur Blvd.</div><div>Moderate. From Anglers Inn parking area, follow Berma Road about 0.1 miles to trail on right. Take Anglers Spur to the fork and follow the Valley trail on the right fork. Trail follows creek through open valley to intersection with Gold Mine Loop. (yellow blaze)</div><div>Easy. Trail starts from Gold Mine Loop near steam crossing and passes prospectors’ trenches and overgrown Civil War earthworks. Ends at the Anglers Spur (yellow blazed).</div><div>NOTE: Blazes are 2”x6” painted rectangles on trees that mark trail. Double blazes indicate trail intersections and significant bends in trail.</div></div>
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